

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 PM-04 MC-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PRS-01 L-03 /027 W

----- 070397

P R 101213Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 990

INFO SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

USIA WASHDC

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 5467

USIA PASS IEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, MPOL, TH

SUBJECT: AIRCRAFT FROM VIENTNAM AND LAOS

REF: BANGKOK 5366

1. NEWSMEN HAVE ASKED WHETHER U.S. CLAIMS OWNERSHIP OF HELICOPTER REPORTED REFTEL. WE HAVE REPLIED: "THE HELICOPTER IS IN THE POSSESSION OF THAI AUTHORITIES. U.S. OFFICIALS ARE LOOKING INTO THE MATTER."

2. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE HELICOPTER, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOJ REPORTEDLY REPLIED CRYPTICALLY: "IT WILL BE RETURNED TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER."

3. SINCE WE HAVE NOT HAD ACCESS TO THE HELICOPTER OR TO THE O-1 FROM LAOS, WE CANNOT ASCERTAIN THEIR PROVENANCE. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE TAIL NUMBERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED, AND A MARKING VISIBLE IN A PRESS PHOTO OF THE HELICOPTER HAS BEEN TENTATIVELY IDENTIFIED AS NORTH VIETNAMESE.

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4. PLANES AND POSSIBLY ALSO BOATS OF MAP/MASF ORIGIN

(IF THAT IS THE CASE) MUST BE EXPECTED TO TRICKLE OUT INTO THAILAND FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD INDEFINITELY CONTINUE TO ROIL THE WATERS BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE U.S. AND BETWEEN THAILAND AND HER NEIGHBORS BY INSISTING ON U.S. TITLE.

5. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND LEAVING THIS MATTER FOR THE THAI TO WORK OUT WITH THE VIETNAMESE, IN THE CASE OF THE HELICOPTER, AND WITH THE LAO IN THE CASE OF THE O-1. WE COULD SEEK EXPLICIT ASSURANCES FROM THE THAI THAT THEY WOULD NOT REGARD SUCH A POSITION AS ESTABLISHING A RETROACTIVE PRECEDENT THAT MIGHT BE APPLIED TO EARLIER MILITARY ITEMS RECOVERED FROM INDOCHINA.

6. DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS REQUESTED.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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